

to be realized (25). History proves that they were mistaken. We may readily concede this, while we hold to their inspiration. It should not be necessary in an academic discussion of this kind for one to pause at every step to defend his orthodoxy; but I may be allowed to explain here what I mean. The Apostles' references to a speedy advent express a personal hope rather than an inspired prediction. Jesus told them that the time of the "Parousia" was not a matter of revelation. Their personal expectation therefore was not based on the authority of Christ. Paul was frank enough to acknowledge this. When he recommended the Corinthians to abstain from marriage, because of "the present distress"—evidently meaning thereby the woes and calamities associated with our Lord's Second Coming—he added that he spoke not by any "commandment of the Lord," but was giving them merely his own advice (26). In his Epistles, too, we find unmistakeable traces of the educative process which ever marks the Divine procedure. In his letter to the Thessalonians, which was written first, he intimates that the "Parousia" is at hand, and in describing it he uses the current Jewish phraseology. In his later writings, however, he has grown into a more spiritual conception, or at least he has a more spiritual mode of expression. In his elaborate theodicy in Romans ix-xi, he assumes that the consummation of the Gospel's work lies in an indefinitely remote future. He knew well from his own experience that the conversion of the Gentiles was a slow, hand-picking process: and that their evangelization and the consequent gathering in of the Jews, which were to precede the end, meant a far-distant realization of the Kingdom. Yet these two views which are so palpably conflicting, were allowed to remain in the New Testament writings.

(25). James 5 : 1-8 and I. Peter 4 : 7 and II. Peter 3 : 8-13.

(26). I. Cor. 7 : 25-40.